

*al Survey etc.*  
A Strategy Survey of Presbyterianism in Alaska  
(Preliminary and Introductory)

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This report is written subsequent to two recent visits by the surveyor to the territory, both of which were made primarily in connection with a study of KSEW, Sitka. In March 1958, at the request of the Department of Work in Alaska, he visited Fairbanks and Anchorage in company of Rev. Brian Cleworth, assistant secretary in the Department. At that time he interviewed key city planning personnel, superintendents of schools, building inspectors, and others, and met with the strategy committee in each city, discussing with them the role and responsibilities of a strategy committee, and the strategy problems of the area.

In July-August, 1958, he again visited the territory, and while at Juneau interviewed key people in the territorial offices. A. L. Anderson, executive of the Alaska Resource Development Board was particularly helpful. Dr. DeFoe, commissioner of Education, and his associate Mr. Isaac, Mr. Harmon of the Department of Public Welfare, the office of Francis Kester, Bureau of Vital Statistics of the Department of Public Health, and Victor Fisher, executive of the Territorial Bureau of Urban Redevelopment, were particularly helpful in providing information.

Published sources will be quoted in the body of the report and in the bibliography.

This report is designated as preliminary and introductory because it is just that. The work accomplished thus far is not designed as a professional study, nor is it of sufficient scope to provide an evaluation of the Presbyterian work in the territory. It provides a broad perspective on which more detailed study can be built.

Population:<sup>1</sup>

While Alaska has had a general trend of growth, with current population estimated at 212,000 (some say 215,000), it has had sizeable fluctuations. In 1929, for instance there were fewer people in the territory than there had been in 1900 or 1910. Since 1920, however, each census has shown a substantial increase over the preceding one, with increasing numerical and percentage momentum. Unless some very radical change occurs between now and 1960, the next census will show a continuation of this tendency.

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1 See Everett L. Perry, Haines House, February 1955 for 1950 population analysis.

Table 1

Population of Alaska, 1880-1958

<u>Census Date</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Increase or Decrease</u>	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1958	212,000*	7,000	3.4
1954 (July 1)	205,000	76,357	59.4
1950 (April 1)	128,643	56,119	77.4
1939 (Oct. 1)	72,524	13,246	22.3
1929 (Oct. 1)	59,278	4,242	7.7
1920 (Jan. 1)	55,036	-9,320	-14.5
1910	64,356	764	1.2
1900	63,592	31,540	98.4
1890	32,540	-1,374	-4.1
1880	33,426	-----	-----

\* current estimate

Alaska's population comprises about 35,000 natives (Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts) and a currently unknown number of military personnel.<sup>2</sup>

As of 1950 about 27% of the population was in southeastern Alaska--the Panhandle, about 69% in the interior, including Anchorage and Fairbanks, and the remainder on the Arctic Coast.

In recent years the interior section has been gaining much more rapidly than the other portions of the territory. The native segment of the population has been relatively static in size, compared with rapid increase in whites.

The Anchorage district, as of 1950, was the smallest proportion natives (11.9%) and the Arctic coast the largest (83.7%). Southeastern Alaska was 28.1% native.

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2 Current figures are never released. However, it is probably around 40,000 to 45,000.



Because of the isolation of Alaska an accurate count of people entering and leaving the territory month by month is available. A high in passenger traffic was achieved in 1956, when 293,771 persons either entered or left.

Arrivals and departures are frequently not in balance. In the years 1950-1953, which included the activities incident to the Korean War, Alaska gained 37,176 people by migration. The three succeeding years showed increasing losses by migration: 1954--3,027; 1955--5,598; 1956--6,571. The total loss of these three years was more than 40% of the increase of the previous three.

The figures for 1957 will be released shortly.

### The Economy:

One of the best sources of information on the economy of Alaska is that of the Alaska Resource Development Board, of which A. L. Anderson is executive director. This is the source from which Dr. Milton Brown derived the background material used in his report on Sheldon Jackson.

According to Mr. Anderson, the most stable part of the economy, which can be foreseen presently, is that of the pulp industry in Southeastern Alaska. One mill is in operation, another is under construction, and about two more will provide maximum utilization of the pulp wood resources.

This will result in a modest population increase, mainly in the white population, a group of highly skilled technicians mainly in the plants but some in the woods, and an increase which will come partially in the centers where the mills are located, and in lumbering activities scattered throughout the southeast. Using Sitka as an example, about 400 will be employed in the mill and 300 in logging. Part of this group will comprise people already living in the area. Thus there is little basis for the highly speculative phase as found in Ketchikan, which presently leaves one half of the two large apartment houses vacant.

In the interior there is inevitably much more speculation, and great dependence on what happens to the military. Much of the interior boom has been dependent upon funds coming from this source. In Nenana, for instance, 800 dormitory beds have recently been ordered for construction workers at the missile base, but this could not be forecast far in advance. This was also true of the radar installations. It will be temporary in nature, with only a few people left for actual operation.

While, unknown (but presumably large) oil, gas, and mineral deposits are undoubtedly of ultimate importance, and will contribute to population growth, one cannot project plans for their utilization with high degree of exactitude.

On the other hand, it is quite likely that presently established centers of transportation, such as Anchorage and Fairbanks in the interior, will continue to function as important centers, and will build up as activities in their hinterlands develop. This will help to minimize the uncertainties and fluctuations of the military, on which they are so much dependent presently.

### The Presbyterian Churches:

What has been happening statistically to the Presbyterian churches is indicated by Tables II and III. Presbyterian work has been related historically very intimately to the native population--the stationary segment--and has received relatively small gain from the large native-white increase. This is probably in part a natural result of the extremely fluid population, and partially because we have not adjusted our ministry to the demands of new church development.



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Table II

Membership of Presbyterian Churches  
in the Presbytery of Alaska  
by Selected Years, 1930-1957

Church	Church Membership				Inc. or Dec. 1930-1940		Inc. or Dec. 1940-1950		Inc. or Dec. 1950-1957	
	1930	1940	1950	1957	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Angoon,										
Angoon	--	88	63	49	88	all	-25	-28.4	-14	-22.2
Auke Bay										
by the										
Lake	--	--	--	83	--	--	--	--	83	all
Craig	53	29	59	61	-24	-45.3	30	103.4	2	3.4
Haines	92	74	85	130	-18	-19.6	11	14.9	45	52.9
Hoonan	200	111	104	101	-89	-44.5	-7	-6.3	-3	-2.9
Hydaburg	128	127	187	126	-1	-0.8	60	47.2	-61	-32.6
Juneau Ml.	118	79	111	169	-39	-33.1	32	40.5	58	52.3
Killisno	78	N.L.	N.L.	N.L.	-78	-all	--	--	--	--
Northern										
Light	139	207	198	318	68	48.9	-9	-4.3	120	60.6
Kake Ml.	114	81	78	102	-33	-28.9	-3	-3.7	24	30.8
Kasaan	46	32	--	9	-14	-30.4	-32	-all	9	all
Ketchikan	63	86	73	132	23	36.5	-13	-15.1	59	80.8
Klawock	183	119	84	90	-64	-35.0	-35	-29.4	6	7.1
Klukwan	61	47	50	60	-14	-23.0	3	6.4	10	20.0
Metlakatla	186	203	168	134	17	9.1	-35	-17.2	-34	-20.2
Petersburg,										
First	69	35	31	47	-34	-49.3	-4	-11.4	16	51.6
Sitka,										
First	196	272	336	316	76	38.8	64	23.5	-20	-6.0
Skagway,										
First	37	73	72	79	36	97.3	-1	-1.4	7	9.7
Saxman	40	30	N.L.	N.L.	-10	-25.0	-30	-all	--	--
Wrangell	72	73	122	137	1	1.4	49	67.1	15	12.3
Yukutat	--	--	--	48	--	--	--	--	48	all
TOTAL	1,875	1,766	1,821	2,191	-109	-5.8	55	3.1	370	20.3

N.L. - Not Listed

Table III

Membership of Presbyterian Churches  
in the Presbytery of Yukon  
by Selected Years, 1930-1957

Church	Church Membership				Inc. or Dec. 1930-1940		Inc. or Dec. 1940-1950		Inc. or Dec. 1950-1957	
	1930	1940	1950	1957	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Anchorage, First	77	97	416	562	20	26.0	319	328.9	146	35.1
Anchorage, Faith	N.L.	N.L.	34	121	--	--	34	all	87	255.8
Anchorage, Hillcrest	N.L.	N.L.	N.L.	46	--	--	--	--	46	all
Barrow, Ookeavik	328	448	469	561	120	36.6	21	4.7	92	19.6
Big Delta	--	--	--	15	--	--	--	--	15	all
College Univ. Comm.	N.L.	N.L.	20	109	--	--	20	all	89	445.0
Cordova	34	48	45	N.L.	14	41.2	-3	-6.3	-45	-all
Barrow Point	55	N.L.	N.L.	N.L.	-55	-all	--	--	--	--
Fairbanks, First	71	83	231	332	12	16.9	148	178.3	101	43.7
Healy Fork, Railbelt	N.L.	N.L.	N.L.	27	--	--	--	--	27	all
Nenana, First	10	7	N.L.	N.L.	-3	-30.0	-7	-all	--	--
Palmer United Prot.	N.L.	61	130	190	61	all	69	131.1	60	46.2
St. Lawrence Island, Gambell	N.L.	N.L.	161	171	--	--	161	all	10	6.2
Savoonga	N.L.	N.L.	139	185	--	--	139	all	46	33.1
Spenard, Woodland Park	N.L.	N.L.	26	183	--	--	26	all	157	603.8
Wainwright, Olgonik	115	128	118	116	13	11.3	-10	-7.8	-2	-1.7
Wales, Thornton Ml.	--	75	114	N.L.	75	all	39	52.0	-114	-all
Wasilla, First	N.L.	N.L.	7	39	--	--	7	all	32	557.1
TOTAL	690	947	1,910	2,657	257	37.2	963	101.7	747	39.1
Total-Pby. of Alaska	1,875	1,766	1,821	2,191	-109	-5.8	55	3.1	370	20.3
TOTAL- ALASKA	2,565	2,713	3,731	4,848	148	5.8	1,018	37.5	1,117	30.0

N.L. - Not Listed



Table IV

Presbyterian Membership Ratio to Population,  
1930-1958<sup>1</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Members per 1,000 population</u>
1930	59,278	2,565	43.3
1940	72,524	2,713	37.4
1950	128,643	3,731	29.0
1958	212,000	4,848*	20.5

1 In the 1958 period it would probably be fairer to compare with the civilian population, roughly 175,000, or 27.7 members per 1,000.

\* Membership figure for 1957.

Table IV indicates that the Presbyterian churches have not been keeping pace with the increase in population.

Anchorage:

Anchorage area has by far outstripped all other parts of the territory in population growth since 1929, presently accounting for well over 40% of the population of all of Alaska.

In 1929 the city itself had a population of 2,277, and the whole district, which includes roughly a "metropolitan" area, 2,736. At that time Anchorage was little more than half as large as either Juneau or Ketchikan. In 1939, with 3,495 in the city and 4,229 in the district (including the city) Anchorage was still substantially smaller than the two Southeastern cities.

With World War II and the military activities incident to it, Anchorage became, by 1950, unquestionably the largest population concentration in Alaska. At that time the city had 11,254 inhabitants, and the total district had 32,060. Suburbs such as Eastchester, Mountain View, and Spenard were as large or larger than Anchorage city had been in 1929.

Subsequent to the 1950 census, which is the latest official complete count, Anchorage has continued to grow. With the Korean War and the increasing importance of the Arctic for national defense, temporary wartime installations have been made permanent, and the overall population has expanded. As of 1956 local authorities say there were 29,000 inhabitants in the city limits, and 63,600 in the metropolitan area, excluding the "on-base" military. As of 1955 this population segment amounted to over 22,000. While the total military population may have declined, the on-base population probably has increased, so that the overall population of the Anchorage area is somewhere in the 85,000-90,000 range. The latest planning commission estimate is 94,500 including all military personnel. Presently



this is also the summer maximum population.

As the largest city in Alaska, Anchorage has the only resident full-time city planning staff in the territory, and substantial planning data are available.

Since 1956 only 340 dwelling units have been added to the inventory or 15,400 non-military dwellings in existence at that time. Since 55 dwelling units were lost by demolition there was a net gain of only 285 dwellings between the time of the last comprehensive study and the survey visit of March, 1958. At most the population increase indicated by housing would be less than 1,000, but with the known easing up of the housing situation because of changes in military policy it is likely that there has been no overall increase since 1956. Local authorities and the available statistics confirmed the impression of the surveyor that there had been relatively little growth in the last two years or so.

As to the future, one must agree with the local authorities that "there is nothing upon which to base a reliably accurate population forecast for the Anchorage area."<sup>1</sup> More than in most places in the states, population is tied to the level of employment, and that, in turn, is related to the level of military activity, including military construction projects.

Despite the marked dependence of Anchorage on the military, one must of necessity come to the conclusion that the city is gaining something of an independent stature, such that it will not be fatally damaged by any decline in the military, which in itself is unlikely unless world conditions change radically. Anchorage has a firm position as a transportation and service center to the interior by virtue of its location on the railroad, the use of its airfields for transpacific and transpolar as well as its domestic flights, its centrality to an area which is being explored for oil, and the development of its harbor facilities. The Methodist University will add its bit to the total. As to exactly how much, how fast, or when further population expansion will occur, one could say only with difficulty.

As far as Presbyterianism is concerned, much of the strength is found in First Church, located downtown. As of December 1957 it had a membership of 562 and current receipts budget for the 1957 fiscal year of \$63,668.

Second in size is the Woodland Park Church, located in Spenard, by far the fastest growing suburb of Anchorage. While it has a new and attractive building, its potential building site probably does not nearly coincide with its potential growth. (Membership 183 and current receipts \$18,383).

The third church in strength is that of Faith. (Membership 121 and current receipts \$11,707). Its problem of future physical expansion is a very difficult one. It is located basically too near First Church (3/4 mile), but probably draws people who would not naturally gravitate to First. To the immediate south its local parish is limited by low ground and an industrial district. Its immediate surroundings, while they might have been very good with sufficient elbow room and buffers, is now rigidly hemmed in with third rate commercial properties which makes plans for expansion at the present site very doubtful. Yet there is no

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Base of the Greater Anchorage Area, City Planning Commission, 1956.



natural area to which it could go, and still maintain the local type of service which has been developed in Fairview. The Methodist Church has pre-empted the better residential district to the east, and the south, in which the Episcopalians have a good site, is of insufficient size to warrant a relocation in the immediate future.

On the basis of the survey materials, including an analysis of the land suitable for residential use, it seems clear that if another major population push comes, it must be either in the east or south. Therefore, it would seem to be a sound strategy to secure good sites in both these directions, with possible short range "mission" type activity in the direction of Nunaka Valley, until there is sufficient growth in immediate prospect to warrant a new church development project. At that time it may seem clearer that Faith could abandon its present location, permitting First Church to take up the slack in the central area, and with Faith concentrating on one of these two major suburban thrusts.

Hillcrest Church seems now adequately supplied with a physical plant for the foreseeable future. While its area has a dense population, it is limited by military land in possible expansion.

#### Fairbanks:

Much in the same pattern as Anchorage, Fairbanks has developed as the second city of Alaska, with no current competition. In 1910 Fairbanks was a city of 3,541 population, as a result of the Gold Rush. In the next ten years it lost over two-thirds of this population, and by 1939 was still smaller than in 1910. However, it too felt the impact of World War II, and in 1950 had 5,771 inhabitants, with a total of 19,409 in the district, which includes a sizeable portion of the central interior. Again, the post-1950 happenings have contributed to its further growth. The 1956 figures give the city 10,050 and the trading or metropolitan area 38,000. By a comprehensive locally conducted dwelling unit census in late 1957 the city population was placed at 15,257, with 11,857 additional civilians living outside the city limits within a twenty mile radius. With the military population placed at 29,000 the total Fairbanks area population was estimated to be 56,114.

However, in comparison with Anchorage, the public school ratio is about 4 to 10. This would mean that the total population would actually be nearer the 1956 estimate of 38,000 than the later one, although U.S. News and World Report accepts the larger figure.

The economy of Fairbanks is even more largely dependent upon the military than is Anchorage. However, with possibilities of development for oil and gas, and missilebases and other military activities, and the terminus of the Alaska Railroad, Fairbanks is inevitably a service and transportation center.

It had not grown significantly in the last three years. The building inspector commented that in 1957-58 winter there were no houses roofed over and being completed, an indication of the slack time.



Fairbanks is served largely by First Church, which is centrally located on the edge of a redevelopment area. (Membership 332 and current receipts \$34,669). It needs to be strengthened, and to have additional property for future expansion. Probably this is the number one need in a denominational strategy here. College Church, membership 109 and current receipts \$8,331, near the University of Alaska which currently has nearly 700 students, is a second key point. Its acquisition of additional property is very commendable. The erection of a grade school in the College area is an indication of the thinking of the school board, in contrast to three years ago when they refused to invest in permanent property there.

The second area of probable growth in Fairbanks is in the airport direction. Though the presbytery is purchasing property in this direction, it is probably too near the College Church, if the river is eventually bridged, as seems probable.

A third direction of population expansion is along the Alcan Highway southward. A population estimated by the local study to be somewhat over 3,000 is in the mile two to twenty district. The major churches are those at North Pole. The school board expects to erect a school at about Six mile in the near future. While this area probably would not support a church presently property might be secured at a strategic point probably in the vicinity of the new school aiming at the eventual development of a church. The area should also be covered by a carefully conducted house-to-house census to evaluate need for current services. Much of the territory surrounding Fairbanks is owned by the government and will not be available for expansion.

One indication of the expansion of Fairbanks is the plans of the Golden Valley Electric to increase their output by about seven fold. They now serve about 13,000 people. Under the new arrangement electricity will be much cheaper, as also will be natural gas, if it is piped in.

It should be noted that the missile base project was recently announced, with 800 workers in Nenana. This should be carefully appraised as to the long range significance for Nenana, as soon as possible. In any case, Fairbanks will gain to some extent as a service center for such projects.

#### Planning for the Growth of Alaska:

- (1) Long range planning involves many more uncertainties than in the states, but there is likelihood of population increase:<sup>1</sup>
  - (a) As part of the economic and population expansion throughout the world.
  - (b) The airplane makes accessible former inaccessible areas.
  - (c) With depletion of natural resources elsewhere and increasing costs, development becomes more feasible in Alaska.
  - (d) The military and transportation significance of the north polar regions.
  - (e) Increasing elements of stability, contrasted to the instability of "Gold rush" days, as a variety of resources are developed.

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1 One would hesitate to attempt a scientific evaluation of Governor Stepovick's prediction that Alaska would have 15,000,000 population in thirty years!

On the other hand, possibly the Wall Street Journal is too pessimistic when it realistically says "As of today, no one knows whether oil will be eventually discovered in commercial quantities here in Alaska." June 16, 1958.



- (2) Southeastern Alaska is relatively well established, with a less uncertain future than the interior, with the coming of the pulp mills. This will involve:
  - (a) Some growth in the centers where pulp mills are located, including 40-50 highly trained technicians--Ketchikan, Sitka (2,000 per mill?)--possibly Wrangell, and Juneau later.
  - (b) Scattering of some people, perhaps 1,000 in total, in lumbering operations. This also includes some few technicians as well as laborers.
  - (c) The Resource Development Board anticipates no ancillary industrial expansion around the pulp mills, contrary to expectations of some people from the states.
- (3) Present centers of the interior, such as Anchorage and Fairbanks, though originally based largely on the military, are likely to maintain their advantage as transportation and service centers, and become more like stateside cities.
- (4) There seems to be continued uncertainty and probability of fluctuation in the interior, because of the military and the shifts and fluctuation of mineral developments.
- (5) Statehood will not result in inevitable growth. Much depends upon the set-up of the new government. Likely helps will be:
  - (a) in possibilities of negotiations with Canada
  - (b) in control over the tidelands, for industry, oil, etc.
  - (c) increased tourist and other interest as result of statehood.
- (6) Overcoming of tuberculosis will result in long range increase of native population with almost inevitable overpopulation, except for development of resources or out-migration.
- (7) Urbanization tendencies are clearly evident, even in some of the smaller places. Some natives are tending to leave the small villages, where there is poverty of opportunity, for the larger places. Studies now in process through the Department of Health will indicate the extent to which this has been happening since 1950.



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